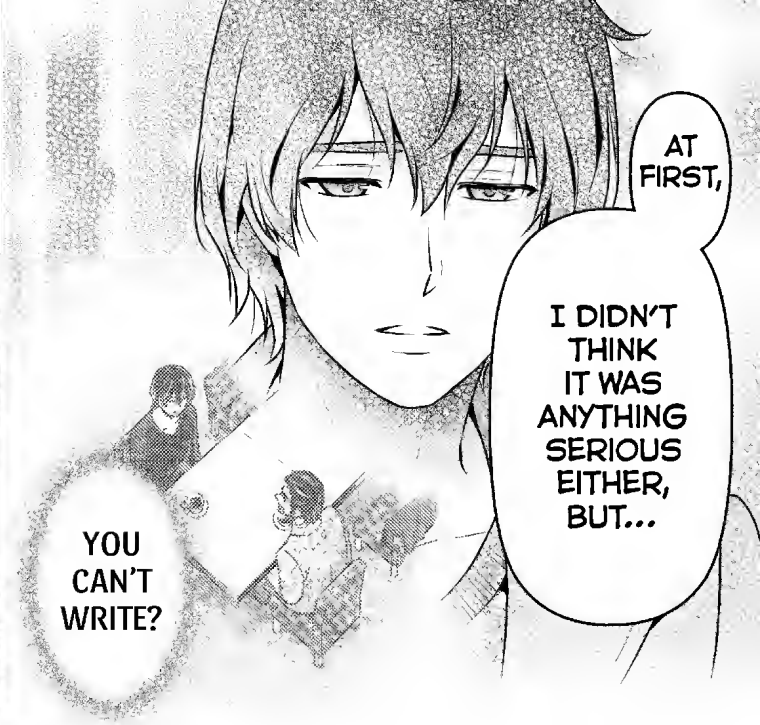
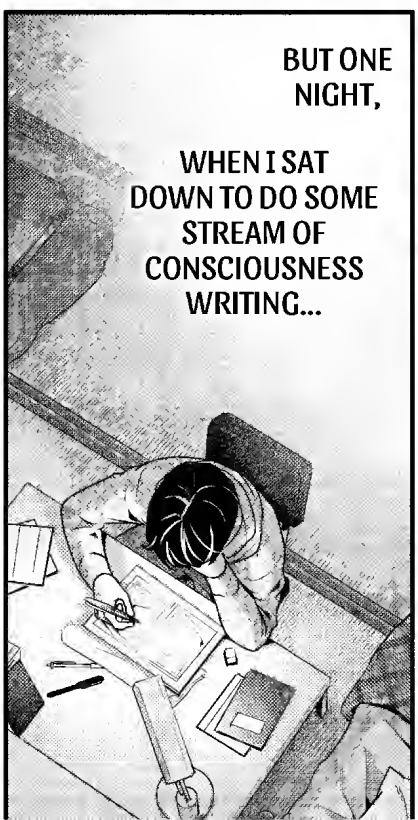
KC
KODANSHA COMICS
Domestic Girlfriend
209
KEI SASUGA

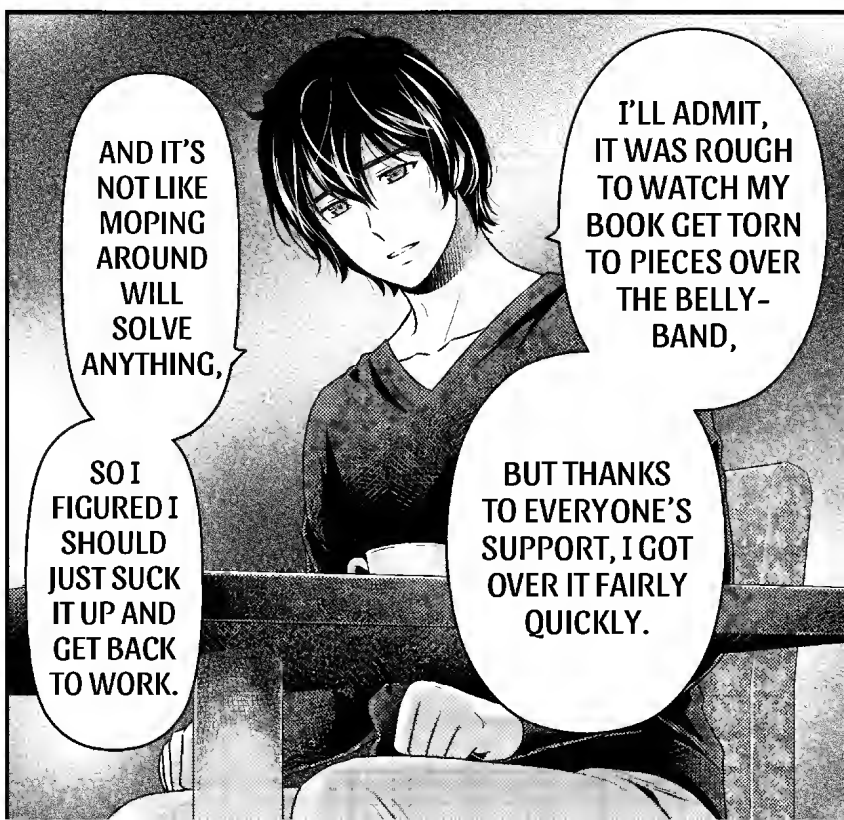
DOME X GIRL
I...
...HIT A BRICK WALL.
NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY, I JUST CAN'T SEEM TO WRITE ANYTHING.
HUH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T WRITE?
LIKE, YOU'RE IN A SLUMP?
THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO QUIT THE CLUB?
DOESN'T WRITER'S BLOCK COME AND GO?
I DUNNO.
THIS HAS NEVER HAPPENED TO ME BEFORE.
CHAPTER 209: BLANK
KEI SASUGA

NOT THAT YOU DON'T *FEEL* LIKE IT, BUT YOU *CAN'T?*
SINCE WHEN ?
IS IT BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED WITH YOUR BOOK?!

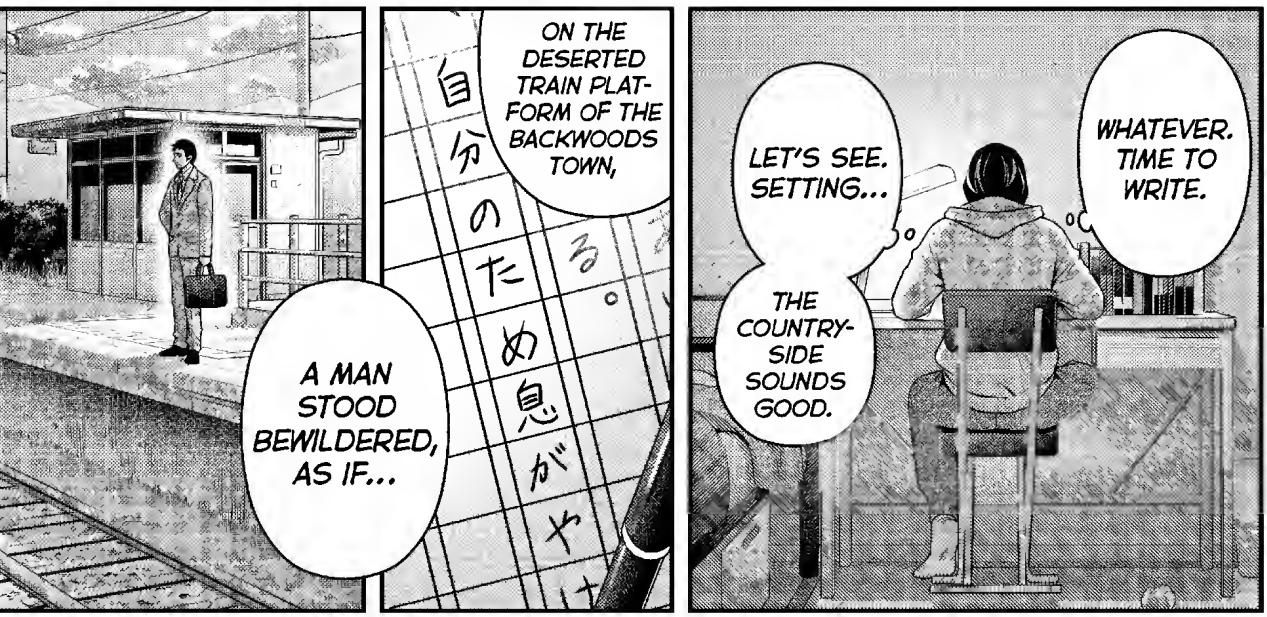

AT FIRST,
I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS ANYTHING SERIOUS EITHER, BUT...
YOU CAN'T WRITE?

TO BE HONEST,
I DIDN'T WANT TO CALL YOU UNTIL I HAD MY NEXT DRAFT READY.


BUT ONE NIGHT,
WHEN I SAT DOWN TO DO SOME STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS WRITING...


I'LL ADMIT, IT WAS ROUGH TO WATCH MY BOOK GET TORN TO PIECES OVER THE BELLY-BAND,
AND IT'S NOT LIKE MOPING AROUND WILL SOLVE ANYTHING,
SO I FIGURED I SHOULD JUST SUCK IT UP AND GET BACK TO WORK.
BUT THANKS TO EVERYONE'S SUPPORT, I GOT OVER IT FAIRLY QUICKLY.

SHOULD I GO WITH YOUNG ADULT FICTION THIS TIME?
PROBABLY BEST TO AVOID ANYTHING CRIME-RELATED IF I DON'T WANT ANOTHER SHITSTORM ON MY HANDS.
WHAT THE HELL AM I THINK-ING?
IF I START SECOND-GUESSING MYSELF, I WON'T BE ABLE TO WRITE ANYTHING ANYMORE.


WHATEVER. TIME TO WRITE.
LET'S SEE. SETTING...
THE COUNTRY-SIDE SOUNDS GOOD.
ON THE DESERTED TRAIN PLAT-FORM OF THE BACKWOODS TOWN,
A MAN STOOD BEWILDERED, AS IF...

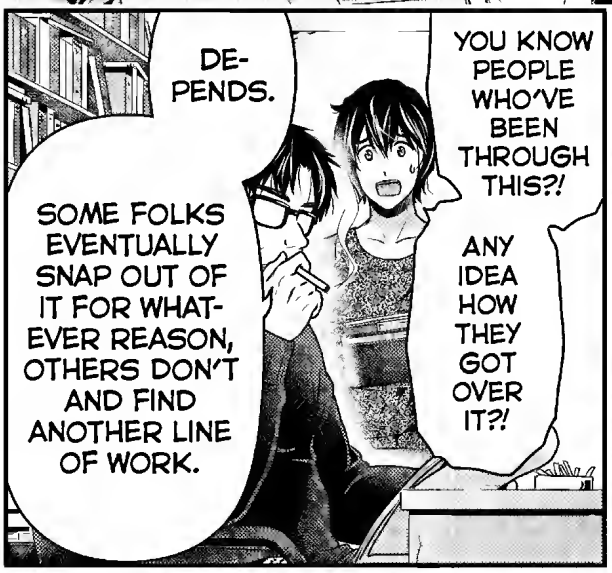
AS IF...

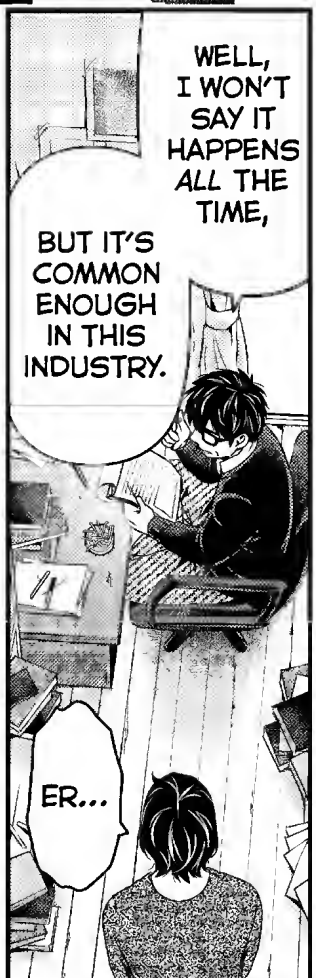
MY MIND JUST... WENT BLANK.
I'VE HAD BOUTS OF WRITER'S BLOCK BEFORE, BUT I ALWAYS CAME OUT OF IT AS SOON AS I GOT OVER WHATEVER WAS EATING AT ME.
THE THING IS,
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S CAUSING IT THIS TIME.
I DUNNO IF I'M BURNT OUT, DEPRESSED OVER ALL THE TROLLING, OR WHAT...
THIS IS A FIRST FOR ME.
TO BE HONEST, I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.
WHO KNOWS IF I'LL EVER BE ABLE TO WRITE AGAIN.
RIGHT NOW, I'M WORTH-LESS.
OBVIOUSLY, THIS MEANS SCRIPT-WRITING'S A NO-GO TOO.
AS FAR AS THE CLUB'S CON-CERNED,
I'M JUST DEAD WEIGHT.
SO, WHILE THE CLUB'S STILL ON BREAK,
I FIG-URED I'D COME GET MY STUFF AND–
THAT'S NOT TRUE AT ALL.

HUH?
NO ONE IN THE CLUB IS DEAD WEIGHT.
SO WHAT IF YOU CAN'T WRITE SCRIPTS ANYMORE?
BEFORE HANA-SEMPAI JOINED, EVERYONE USED TO COLLAB ON THEM, REMEMBER?
PRODUCTION, ACTING, LIGHTING, AUDIO, COSTUME DESIGN...
THERE ARE SO MANY OTHER FUN THINGS YOU COULD DO!
JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN'T WRITE,
THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE *USELESS*, FUJII-KUN!

THANKS.
I GUESS...
...I'LL TALK TO NARA-SAN ABOUT IT.
TSU-TAYA-SAN.
HAVE YOU SEEN THE REVIEWS FOR *SHADES OF TOMORROW*?
REVIEWS? NO...
THE GLOWING REVIEWS ARE STARTING TO BUBBLE UP.
THE CHIEF SAID THE TIDES WOULD TURN ONCE THE NEGATIVE REVIEWS DIED OUT.
GUESS HE SAW THIS COMING, HUH?
EVEN SO,
THE PRICE WE PAID WAS FAR TOO STEEP.
...

LOST YOUR SENSE FOR WRITING, HUH?
HMM.
FWOO
'ZAT RIGHT?


YOU KNOW PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS?!
ANY IDEA HOW THEY GOT OVER IT?!
DE-PENDS.
SOME FOLKS EVENTUALLY SNAP OUT OF IT FOR WHAT-EVER REASON, OTHERS DON'T AND FIND ANOTHER LINE OF WORK.


WELL, I WON'T SAY IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME,
BUT IT'S COMMON ENOUGH IN THIS INDUSTRY.
ER...

IT FEELS LIKE I FORGOT HOW TO RIDE A BIKE ALL OF A SUDDEN.
LIKE, "HOW HAVE I BEEN PEDDLING ALL THIS TIME?"

AT ANY RATE, JUST TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT FOR NOW.
...
FWOO

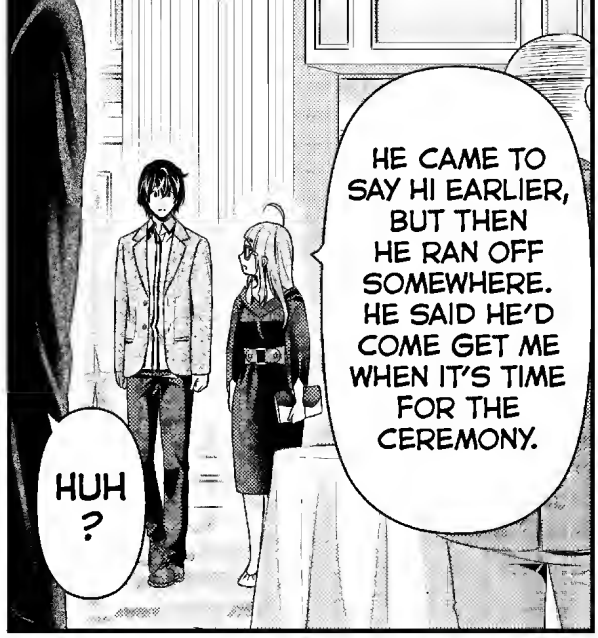
YOU DON'T WANNA HATE BOOKS, DO YOU?
IF YOU GET ANTSY...
...AND TRY TO FORCE YOURSELF TO WRITE LIKE YOU USED TO,
YOU'LL JUST MAKE READING AND WRITING HARDER FOR YOURSELF.
FOR THE MOCHI:
RED BEAN PASTE OR KINAKO*?
KINA-KO!
*KINAKO: ROASTED SOYBEAN FLOUR.

THIS GAME SHOW'S BECOME A REGULAR PART OF NEW YEAR'S, HUH?
YEAH.
WATCHING THIS MAKES ME FEEL LIKE THE NEW YEAR'S FINALLY ARRIVED.
NATSUO-KUN...
...SEEMS KINDA DOWN.
IS WHAT HAPPENED ON CHRIST-MAS IS STILL BUGGING HIM?
WELL, HE ALREADY HAS RUI AFTER ALL.
IT HAD TO BE A SHOCK GETTING BLINDSIDED LIKE THAT BY A GIRL HE THOUGHT WAS JUST A FRIEND.
I WONDER HOW...
...HE FEELS ABOUT IT.
TAP

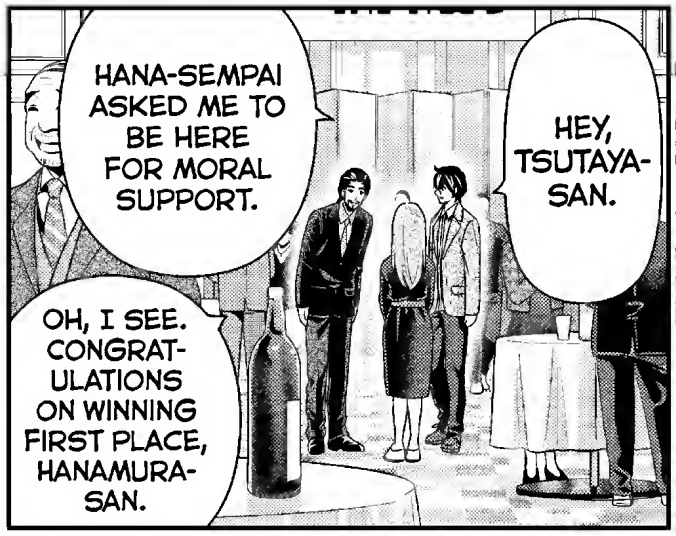
*KOTATSU: A LOW-RESTING TABLE COVERED BY A HEAVY BLANKET AND EQUIPPED WITH A HEATER UNDERNEATH.

I WANNA HEAR YOU SQUEAL SOME MORE, SO HERE COMES ROUND TWO.
こしょこしょ TICKLE
こしょこしょ TICKLE
こしょこしょっ TICKLE
HYAH!
OH...
REAL-LY?
AH HA HA HA!
H-HINA-NEE! YOU'RE KILLING ME!
TAKE THAT!
HINA-NEE!
ズレッ SLIP
WUMP
HNGH!
AH HA HA
C'MON! KNOCK IT OFF!

OH, GROW UP, YOU TWO.
S-SORRY.
OH...
!!!
HANA-SEM-PAI!
79th Shinkosha Literary Award Ceremony Venue


HUH?
HE CAME TO SAY HI EARLIER, BUT THEN HE RAN OFF SOMEWHERE. HE SAID HE'D COME GET ME WHEN IT'S TIME FOR THE CEREMONY.

FUJII-KUN!
THANKS FOR COMING!
SORRY I'M LATE. I GOT HELD UP AT THE STATION.
ARE YOU ALONE? WHERE'S YOUR EDITOR?


HEY, TSUTAYA-SAN.
HANA-SEMPAI ASKED ME TO BE HERE FOR MORAL SUPPORT.
OH, I SEE. CONGRAT-ULATIONS ON WINNING FIRST PLACE, HANAMURA-SAN.

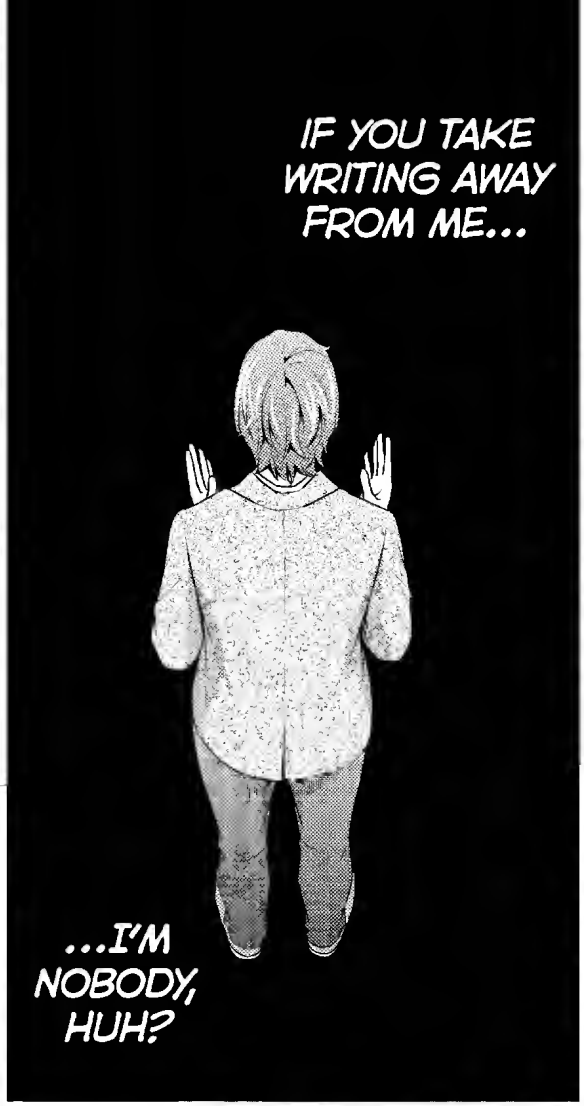
YOU OKAY?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IT MUST BE HARD FOR YOU...
...TO ATTEND THIS KIND OF THING RIGHT NOW.

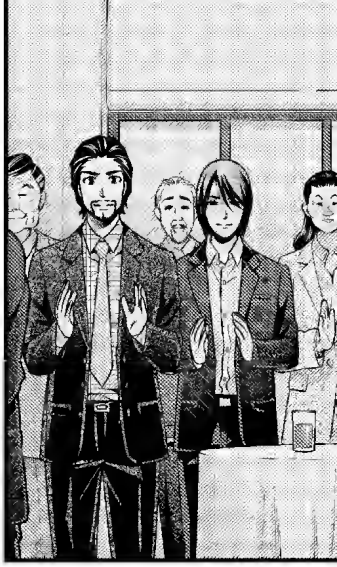
YEAH, I...THINK I'LL BE OKAY.
IF I'M LUCKY, IT MIGHT EVEN HELP GET THE JUICES FLOWING AGAIN.

FUJII-KUN?
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

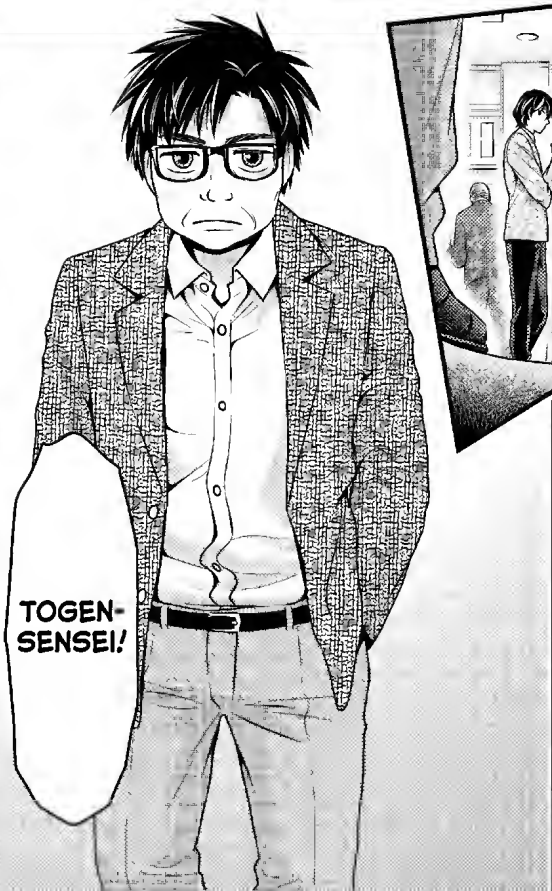
TOGEN-SENSEI WAS A JUDGE THIS TIME?
HUH? OH...
YEAH, BUT HE TENDS TO SHY AWAY FROM THESE KINDS OF EVENTS.
OH.
SHIGEMITSU TOGEN
KENKO TOMOE
THAT'S TOO BAD.
I WAS HOPING I'D GET TO SPEAK WITH HIM.
HANAMURA-SAN! IT'S ALMOST TIME!
The AKUTAGAWA LITERARY AWARD CEREMONY
UM...
I-IT'S...
...TRULY AN HONOR TO RECEIVE THIS AWARD.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
CLAP

I WONDER IF...
...I'LL EVER GET USED TO THIS EMPTY FEELING IN MY CHEST.
AND WITH THAT,
PLEASE ENJOY THE FESTIVITIES.


IF YOU TAKE WRITING AWAY FROM ME...
...I'M NOBODY, HUH?



YOU ACTUALLY SHOWED UP FOR ONE!
I THOUGHT YOU HATED AWARD CEREMONIES?


TOGEN-SENSEI!

SEN-SEI!
SO, I FIGURED I'D STOP BY AND CHAT FOR A BIT.
THAT, AND THE WRITING WAS SUMMA THE HIGHEST QUALITY I'VE SEEN FROM A NEW AUTHOR LATELY.
BUT, WELL... THE WINNER THIS TIME'S A FRIEND OF YOURS, RIGHT?
WHAT KINDA ADVICE DO THEY EXPECT ME TO GIVE A BUNCHA NEWBIES I CAN'T RELATE TO IDEOLOGICALLY OR STYLISTICALLY?
YOU BET YOUR ASS I DO. THEY ALWAYS MAKE ME GIVE A SPEECH AT THESE DEALS.
I-I'M A HUGE FAN! I'VE READ ALL YOUR BOOKS!
BUT HER REAL NAME'S HANA SAKAKI.
SHE GOES BY THE ALIAS KAZUMI HANA-MURA,
I-IT'S A PLEA-SURE TO MEET YOU!
SEMPAI, THIS IS SHIGE-MITSU TOGEN-SENSEI.
SENSEI, THIS IS MY UPPER-CLASSMAN FROM THE DRAMA CLUB.
SEN-SEI?
UM... YES, WHY?
YOUR LAST NAME, SAKAKI.
IS THAT SPELLED WITH THE SAME CHARACTER FOR EVER-GREEN?!
GRIP
HANA
SA-KAKI ?
DID YOU SAY,

...SEI?
SEN...